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**Implementing  
The African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE)**

# **Implementing The African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE)**

## **I- Introduction**

Over the last years, many African countries have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and have put in place National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) Plans to support their socio-economic development efforts. These successes have been made possible thanks to the combined efforts of all stakeholders under the leadership of Governments and support from regional and international organizations as well as bilateral partners and the private sector. These efforts need to be strengthened and extended to remaining African countries to make them benefit from the knowledge economy. In this context, a coordinated and multi-pronged strategy at both the national and sub-regional levels is essential to rollout the knowledge economy in the continent. This Action Plan, which aims at building a region fully benefiting from ICT services by the year 2015 was adopted through several fora, under the aegis of the African Union (AU) Commission and the technical coordination of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

## **II- Background**

The African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) was developed upon request from the Second African Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Accra, Ghana from 2-4 February 2005. ARAPKE is based on the Geneva Plan of Action adopted by the world leaders at the first phase of the WSIS and the “Accra Commitments for Tunis 2005” adopted by the African ICT Ministers as well as on the vision defined by both the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), under the leadership of the African Union.

By building upon the recommendations and results reached from the Accra Conference, the Action Plan is expected to guide African stakeholders in rolling out the information society in the continent. In addition, the Action Plan is expected to contribute to the realization of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Within this context, it was designed to:

- define an African approach and positions in the process of preparation of the second phase of the WSIS,
- create a foundation for national, regional and international cooperation over a period of 10 years, up to 2015,
- make full use of ICTs for wealth creation with the aim of improving the life of African populations, and
- enhance the productive capacity of African countries.

In this regard a framework for action was developed by African Governments and other stakeholders. The framework is in Table I.

## **III- The Process**

The Action Plan development process was coordinated by ECA with the participation of a Committee of Experts composed of the Bamako Bureau and the African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) on the AISI, as well as experts from member States, the Diaspora, the African Union Commission, The African Telecommunication Union (ATU) the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Coordination of the development of key commitments of the Action Plan was distributed among African experts. African stakeholders also provided their input through various discussion lists set up for this purpose.

The African Ministerial Committee on ICT held in Cairo on 10 May 2005 reviewed the Plan and approved the framework. Several other meetings were organized to review and enrich the Action Plan.

The Action Plan was adopted in September 2005 by the African ICT Ministers in a meeting organized in Geneva as a side event to Prepcom3 of the WSIS.

The Commission of the AU, the ECA and the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) organized a workshop during the Tunis Summit with participation of African stakeholders and their partners to mobilize support and discuss implementation of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan is available at: <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/docs/ARAPKE%20doc1.pdf>

**Table I: Framework of the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy**

<b>Commitment No.</b>	<b>Key Accra Commitments</b>	<b>Action Lines</b>
1.	Enabling environment	To establish regional sub/regional coordination mechanisms To establish legal/regulatory framework for ICT development in Africa
2.	Infrastructure and access	Development of Telecommunications backbones Development of exchange points Expansion of infrastructure, especially to rural areas Establishing a conducive policy and regulatory environment Creating Universal Access service
3.	e-Strategies and Policies	Developing NICI Plans & their linkages with MDGs, PRSPs Developing / Implementing sectoral strategies: e-education, e-Government, e-health, e-tourism, e-commerce, etc. Developing / Implementing sub-Regional strategies
4.	e-Local	Establish the legislative framework related to the roles and the responsibilities of local governments in the promotion and the management of the information society, in accordance with the process of decentralization; Formulate Local e-government agenda by ensuring its integration into the NICI framework; Establish special action plans for local governments
5.	Information Society Indicators	Collecting Information Society indicators to measure ICT penetration, deployment and impact Collecting indicators on WSIS implementation
6.	Capacity building	Human Resources for the Knowledge Economy Training Institutions & Networks Training material
7.	Research & Development	Innovation & Technological Research Free and Open Source Software
8.	Digital Solidarity	Formulate a Digital Solidarity guide for local government Establish a stakeholders networks;

		Submit a project to the Digital Solidarity Fund
9.	Internet Governance	Legal Framework on e-commerce Digital Transaction & Security Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) Spam Internet Exchange Points AfriNic & other Networks Managing CCTLDs
10.	Women and the Information Society	National machineries for using ICT to empower women Involvement on e-strategy planning and implementation and in sectoral activities, especially SMMEs
11.	Parliamentarians	Action Plan of the Africa ICT4-D MPs Network
12.	Youth	Action Plan of the ICT4-D Youth Network
13.	Cities and Local authorities	Create e-local authorities Network Support South-South cooperation
14.	Media	Sensitization plans at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels
15.	African languages in the cyber space	Develop and establish regional policy and strategies for promoting African Language in the cyberspace Promote research and development on African Language in the cyberspace Establish and sustain a broad program of capacity building on African Languages in the cyberspace
16.	Harnessing the Digital Diaspora	Turn the digital gap into a digital opportunity Build a platform which aims at using ICTs for the development of Africa
17.	Persons with disability	Develop innovative solutions Promote and encourage inclusion / involvement of persons with disabilities in the Information Society development Build special ICT centers equipped with suitable facilities Develop crash programmes
18.	Resource Mobilization & partnership	Organize Resource Mobilization Conferences Prepare project proposals for bilateral and international partners

### Implementing the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy

The Action Plan is based on 18 Action Lines, as per table I. Each Action Line is associated with 6 variables, which are expected to facilitate assessment of activities. The variables are as follows:

- Objectives;
- Strategic actions;
- Time frame;
- Partners;
- Indicators of achievement; and
- Expected impact.

To illustrate the various elements of an Action Line a sample matrix of Action Line 1 on “Enabling environment” is in Table II below.

**Table II: Sample matrix from the African Regional Action Plan**

I – ENABLING ENVIRONMENT					
Objectives	Strategic Actions	Time frame	Partners	Indicators of achievement	Expected impact

1. Establish legal/regulatory framework for ICT development in Africa	1. Encourage the development of national legal & regulatory instruments	2006 – 2008	ECA and other UN agencies, member States, AU, ATU, NEPAD, ADB, International Development Partners, Sub-Regional Associations (TRASA, WATRA, AFRALTI, COMESA, etc.)	National and regional laws Implementation & Enforcement	Competitive markets Economic Growth Regional integration & cross-border trade
	2. Harmonise national and sub-regional frameworks	2006 – 2010		Model Laws and Guidelines	
2. Establish a regional coordination body	1. Creation of the coordination body from sub-regional associations	2006 – 2010	Sub-Regional Associations	Committee being operational	Fair Competition Even playing field Increase in investment Security Development of e-economy
	2. Establish working guidelines for the body	2006	Sub-Regional Associations, ATU, ECA and other UN agencies, ADB	Working Guidelines, Instruments for adjudication	

Following adoption of the ARAPKE framework by the African ICT Ministers, ECA sent out a Request for Project proposal (RfPP) to all African stakeholders using the ARAPKE Template for project description, which is below. At the close of the RfPP in January 2006, 83 proposals were received. A table of the proposals received is in annex 1.

## ARAPKE Template for project description

**Target country/ies**.....

**Leading Agency/REC's/Stakeholders**.....

**Potential Partners:**

.....

**Project Title:**.....

**Programme/Project Focus Areas:**

- Legal Environment/Enabling Environment
- Infrastructure and access
- E-Strategies and Policies
- Information Society Indicators
- Capacity Building
- Research & Development
- Internet Governance
- Women and the Information Society
- Multi-stakeholders – Parliamentarians, Youth, Media etc
- African Languages
- Persons with disability
- Harnessing the Digital Diaspora

- Resource Mobilization & partnership
- Other

**Brief description:**

.....

**Background:**

.....

**Alignment with Sub/Regional Strategies:**

.....

**Proposed Project activities:**

.....

**Sub/Regional benefits:**

.....

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

.....

**Risk Assessment:**

.....

**Budget:**

.....

**Schedule and Milestones:**

.....

**Priority:**

.....

**Long-term Sustainability:**

.....

**Submitted by:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Developing the ARAPKE Implementation Programme**

**Selection criteria**

Based on the ARAPKE Template for project description and upon receipt of proposals from stakeholders, draft selection criteria were developed and an electronic discussion list of African experts established to finalize the selection criteria. Following exchange of views among members of the discussion list, it was decided to reduce and simplify the list of criteria to be based mainly on the geographic coverage of project proposals. In this regard the amended list in table III is proposed.

It is desirable that projects to be selected in the Action Plan bear a regional or sub-regional dimension involving the entire continent, a REC or at least several countries.

Each project should have a designated Lead Agency as well as implementing partners supported by the African Implementation Committee.

Selection of projects will be done by the Steering Committee.

	Table III: Initial Table of ARAPKE Selection Criteria						
	Value added assessment					1-5	
Criteria	Exc.	B.	AB.	M.	a.	Average	Remarks
Convergence							
Global Policy							
ARAPKE pillars							
Local vision							
Civil Society							
Global contributions							
Generalities							
Competencies							
Economy							
Social							
Politics							
Democracy							
Feasibility							
Economic							
Market							
Technicality and functionality							
Public							
Cloning and adaptability							
Sustainability							
Replicability							
Self sufficiency							
Business Model							
Profitability							
Cost of exploitation							

## Steering Committee

After the approval of its structure by the Conference of African ICT Ministers, the Steering Committee is expected, among other activities to:

- finalize the selection criteria;
- review project descriptions for pre-selection of projects;
- seek and receive full project proposals from pre-selected projects;
- advise on finalization of project proposals;
- prepare resource mobilization documents; and
- organize a Resource Mobilization Conference.

Following the Resource Mobilization Conference, the Steering Committee will:

- support project implementation in the various sites
- carry out follow up activities; and
- undertake project evaluation.

It is expected that the Steering Committee will adopt its own mechanisms for project follow up and evaluation and define a timeframe for implementing the selected projects.

## Resource mobilization and partnerships

Partnership in resource mobilization has become increasingly important. This is due to the current tendency to adopt a sector-wide approach that enhances closer collaboration among donors. To be successful in seeking extrabudgetary support and enhancing the allocation of funds to a particular

programme, there is need for knowledge about the policies, structure, decision-making procedures and sectoral funding programmes of donor agencies and funding institutions.

### **Forging partnerships and commitment**

As building the Information Society will be mainly driven by the private sector and as the capital needed to build the infrastructure and related technological innovations is obtained from the private sector, Governments and partners, the Implementation Committee will be used as a crucial mechanism to maximize current and future partnership programs in the use of ICTs for accelerating Africa's socio-economic development.

The Implementation Committee particularly would help to:

- ensure commitment from all partners (governments, private sector and development partners) to work together to enhance the value of specific information society initiatives to the African region as a whole
- create networking mechanisms that will lead to an African knowledge base on critical information society issues
- secure agreement from the private sector and partners
- secure agreement from governments to champion the African Information Society by making use of ARAPKE programmes and also by promoting private sector investment

In this context, it is advised to establish within the Implementation Committee a United Nations Group composed of all UN agencies operating in Africa, such as ECA, ITU, UNDP, UNIDO, UNCTAD, UNESCO, etc. which would provide technical and financial support to the Implementation Committee, focusing on specific ARAPKE themes and the WSIS Action Lines. The UN Committee would also provide all necessary support to the African Union Commission and the African Ministerial Conference through the appropriate organs, including the Implementation Committee, the Committee of Experts and the Ministerial Bureau.

### **Organizing a Resource Mobilization Conference**

A Resource Mobilization Conference will be organized during the second half of 2006 to put together the private sector, development agencies, academia, civil society, bilateral partners and member States. Prior to the Conference, there is need to develop full fledged project proposals according to a format to be adopted by the Steering Committee.

The main objectives of the Resource Mobilization Conference will be to:

- present and discuss project proposals with all stakeholders;
- secure financing agreements with partners;
- adopt mechanisms for project implementation and follow up; and
- devise reporting mechanisms to be submitted to the African Union Commission.

Resource mobilization should have a sub-regional and regional focus, results -oriented, comprehensive, in keeping with the multidimensionality of ICT, prioritized for feasible implementation, partnership-oriented (involving the coordinated participation of all development partners, bilateral, multilateral, and civil society); and based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction.

The Round Table would spell out mutual responsibilities for Governments, African regional organizations as well as donors. It would constitute an appropriate framework for mobilizing

resources across the full spectrum of actors in ICT4D (government, private sector, external partners, and civil society).

The Roundtable is expected to throw clarity on the complementary and mutually reinforcing accountabilities of donors, governments and African regional organizations in mobilizing resources for ARAPKE implementation, and foreground the challenges on the road ahead.

### **Financing projects**

The two major economic and technical continental bodies, namely ADB and ECA supported by the other UN agencies and continental as well as sub-regional development banks (IDB, BADEAC, BCEAO, BOAD, BEAC, etc.) should lead resource mobilization activities. ADB should be in charge of infrastructure financing while ECA would deal with ICT policy and applications. In this context Infrastructure funds would be deposited at ADB while ICT Policy and Applications funds would be managed by ECA. Both institutions would operate under auspices of the Implementation Committee, which will establish mechanisms for disbursing and auditing the funds.

### **Evaluation and follow-up mechanisms of the Action Plan**

#### **Follow up mechanisms**

In order to build an inclusive Information Society the continent needs to commit itself to keep fully engaged, nationally, regionally and internationally, to ensure sustainable follow-up to the implementation of agreements and commitments reached during WSIS process at the Geneva and Tunis summits.

Taking into account the multifaceted nature of building the Information Society, effective cooperation among all stakeholders is needed, based on respect for their mandates and leveraging on their expertise. In this regard, it is essential to set up the following follow up mechanisms:

- National WSIS follow up committees composed of all stakeholders, including Governments, civil society, private sector, academia, etc. to monitor and assess implementation of the Summit decisions and the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE). National Committees may organize follow up conferences once every year.
- Sub-regional coordination committees at the level of Regional Economic Committees (RECs) to monitor and coordinate implementation at the sub-regional level. Sub-regional follow up conferences may be organized prior to the regional conferences.
- Implementation and follow up at the continental level, will be done under the aegis of the African Union (AU) Commission and the technical coordination of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the support of the African Development Bank (ADB).

The Steering Committee which adopted by the Conference of Ministers will serve at the continental level

The Steering Committee, under the auspices of the African Union Commission and technical cooperation of ECA and ADB should organize every two years a regional conference to assess implementation of the WSIS decisions and the ARAPKE, based on national, sectoral and sub-regional reports to be prepared by all the stakeholders.

Evaluation will be done every five years.

### **Putting in place a pool of experts**

Implementing ARAPKE requires huge financial resources and qualified human resources specialized on ICT; the later would be the biggest challenge facing the continent. Hence there is need to put in place a pool of experts to support implementation at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The intervention of the pool of experts would identify problems and bottlenecks at the planning stage and optimize successful implementation by providing viable solutions and mitigating risks. This would facilitate achievement of appropriate results.

The pool of experts will support the national and sub-regional teams in charge of implementing all funded projects. They would assist the teams through advice, national and regional workshops, and training as well as evaluation seminars to be held regularly during the life of a project.

### **Expected role of the Pool of experts**

The pool of experts is expected to provide advice, specialized and targeted training, follow up and continuous evaluation. After assessing problems in cooperation with national staff in charge of project implementation, the pool of experts will establish diagnosis and propose appropriate solutions.

Working groups reporting to the steering committee will be formed, each with representatives from all stakeholders, to work closely with the pool of experts. The chairpersons of the working groups will be appointed by the steering committee.